VISIT…

OBI EPIC COMICS® BOOK ONE $4.95 $5.75 CAN £3.30

epic®

AN ANTHOLOGY

DREADLANDS™ HELLRAISER™ STALKERS™ WILD CARDS™

#1 IN A FOUR-ISSUE LIMITED SERIES

EPIC TM. BOOK ONE. PUBLISHED BY EPIC COMICS, 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, NY 10016. CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER TM COPYRIGHT © 1992. CLIVE BARKER. STALKERS TM COPYRIGHT © 1992. MARK VERHEIDEN AND JAN STRNAD. ART COPYRIGHT © 1992 D'ISRAELI. DREADLANDS TM COPYRIGHT © 1992 STEVE WHITE, ANDY LANNING AND PHIL GASCOINE. WILD CARDS TM COPYRIGHT © 1992 WILD CARDS CONSORTIUM. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. NO PART OF THIS BOOK MAY BE PRINTED OR REPRODUCED IN ANY MANNER WITHOUT THE WRITTEN PERMISSION OF THE AUTHORS AND PUBLISHER. THE STORIES, CHARACTERS AND INCIDENTS APPEARING IN EPIC AND THEIR DISTINCTIVE LIKENESSES ARE TRADE MARKS OF THE RESPECTIVE CREATORS. "EPIC" AND "EPIC COMICS" ARE TRADE MARKS OF EPIC COMICS. PRINTED IN U.S.A.

Contents

Page 3
HELLRAISER
"BIRTH RITE"
By Dan Chichester
Script
William Simpson
Art

Page 14
STALKERS
"THE TERRORIST"
Part One
By Mark Verheiden
Script
D'Israeli
Art

Page 27
DREADLANDS
Steve White
Andy Lanning
Script
Phil Gascoine
Kev Hopgood
Andy Lanning
Art

Page 36
WILD CARDS
"MASKS OF THE
RED DEATH"
Lewis Shiner
Walter Jon Williams
Script
Mike Collins
Kev Hopgood
Art

Dave McKean
Cover

CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER™

Everybody harbors some secret desire, ambition or wish, and there are many ways to fulfill them; hard work, if you're so inclined, the will to suceed, money if you have it, power of the fist or the dollar. . .but there are those who will do anything, sacrifice their very lives, give up their immortal souls, to get what they want.

Enter the Cenobites, the Lords of Order, high priests of pain and torture for whom disfigurement, dismemberment, body piercing are holy institutes, ritual practices to be revered and worshipped. They are the stormtroopers, the agents, the minions of Leviathan, the very emperor of Hell itself. Their mission is to ensnare the greedy, the gluttonous and the deprayed.

Their method is the lament configuration, an intricate puzzle of geometric shapes and patterns and lines that exists in a vast array of forms — from a small metal box to the architecture within a tower block. Only the most desperate and sick minds can unlock its complex and convoluted traceries and when the riddle is finally solved, the configuration opens a highway to the black heart of Hell and summons forth the Cenobites. Now the bargain has been struck. In payment for fulfilling your every fantasy, the will take your soul and rip it apart in a blizzard of hooks and chains and blood. . .

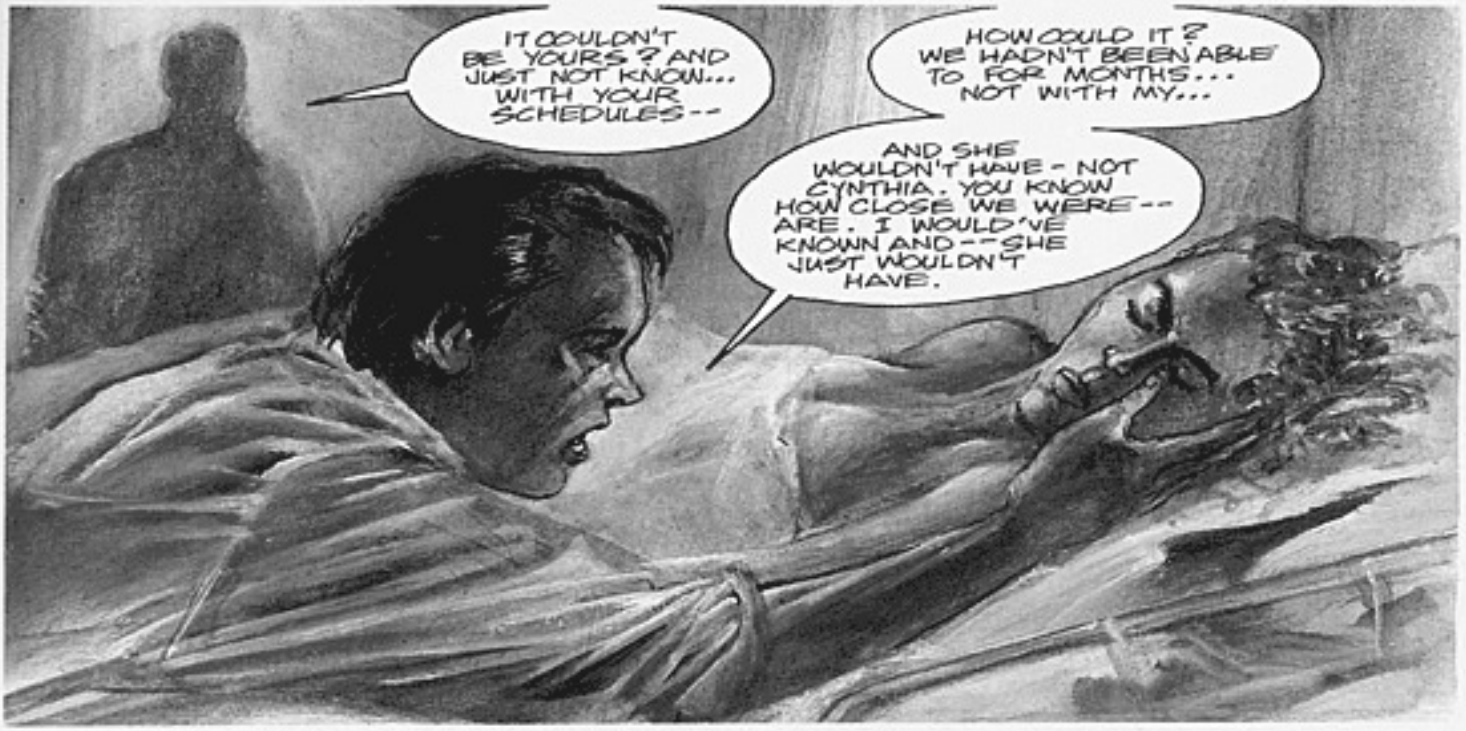
BABY KILLER!
EMBRYO SOULS
HOSPITAL
"NEWS LIVE AT FIVE," WITH YOUR ANCHOR, PAM JURGENS--
--TENSIONS CONTINUED TO BUILD AS THE--
--PASSED A RESOLUTION CONDEMNING THE ACTIONS--
BABY KILLER
THE ISSUES OF ABORTION HIT CLOSE TO HOME TONIGHT, AS ANTI-ABORTION ACTIVISTS CONTINUE THEIR VIGIL OUTSIDE OAKDALE HOSPITAL THIS EVENING.
THEIR PROTEST CENTERS AROUND THE CASE OF CYNTHIA AND STEVEN HILLARD. CYNTHIA HILLARD, YOU WILL RECALL, WAS THE VICTIM OF A BRUTAL BEATING THREE MONTHS AGO...

...THE INCIDENT LEAVING THE THEN PREGNANT MRS. HILLARD IN A COMATOSE STATE.
DOCTORS HAVE STRESSED THAT THE CONTINUING PREGNANCY HAS PUT MRS HILLARD'S OWN PHYSICAL HEALTH IN SEVERE JEOPARDY...
...A FACT THAT HAS NOT STOPPED ANTI-ABORTION ACTIVISTS FROM GAINING AN INJUNCTION AGAINST HUSBAND STEVEN HILLARD TAKING ANY ACTION AGAINST THE FETUS.
NEWS
CYNTHIA HILLARD'S DOCTORS EXPRESS LITTLE HOPE FOR THE COMA PATIENT LIVING THROUGH THE PREGNANCY, AND FEEL CERTAIN HER DECLINING HEALTH WILL HAVE SERIOUS...
...PERHAPS FATAL--REPERCUSSIONS FOR THE FETUS--
KLK
THOUGHT YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE THE BEST LAWYER IN TOWN, MITCH OLD BUDDY.
THEY'VE BROUGHT OUT SOME PRETTY BIG GUNS OF THEIR OWN, STEVE. I'M SORRY IT HASN'T--
WE DON'T HAVE TO STOP FIGHTING, THOUGH. WE CAN--
YOU CAN, MAYBE. NOT ME. LOOK AT ME, MITCH--I DON'T SLEEP, I'M OUT OF SHAPE, THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO ABOUT IT.
THIS IS KILLING ME, MITCH, AND IF I LET THAT HAPPEN, THEN I'VE DONE BOTH ME AND CYNTHIA IN.
WHY KEEP FOOLING OURSELVES? THIS DIDN'T START HERE... IT'S NOT GOING TO END HERE. YOU KNOW WHAT HAS TO BE DONE.
I DON'T KNOW ANYMORE. WHEN IT WAS JUST TALK, THAT WAS ONE THING. BUT WHEN I STARTED TO FIND OUT...
YOU CAN TELL THEM--WHAT REALLY HAPPENED. THEN MAYBE--
THEN THEY LOCK ME UP FOR BEING INSANE AND CYNTHIA DIES FOR SURE. NO "MAYBE" ABOUT IT.

"AND EVEN IF THEY DID LISTEN, DO YOU THINK THEY'D CARE?
"A COUPLE OF YUPPIES HAVE 'MARITAL PROBLEMS' SO THEY GO FOR EVERYTHING FROM BEE POLLEN TO ACUPUNCTURE TRYING FOR HIM TO GET IT UP.
"IT'S AN OBSESSION... JUST LIKE EACH OTHER."
"THEY FINALLY FIND SOMETHING THAT DOES THE TRICK. IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE SOME NEW AGE VIBRATOR-- EXCEPT MY GUESS GOES MORE TOWARD OLDER THAN TIME...
"IT SOLVES THE PROBLEM, ALRIGHT...
"...THE PROBLEM IS, THAT'S NOT ALL IT SOLVES."
WHAT IS... YOUR PLEASURE?
STEVEN! STEVEN WHAT--
CYN! CYN GET--

AH... EACH OTHER. HOW... ROMANTIC.
LET FRIGG... BE YOUR CUPID. TAKE ME... AS YOUR EROS.

LET FRIGG... SHOW YOU... WHAT IT IS LIKE TO TRULY SHARE IN EACH OTHER.
LET US ALL... SHARE IN EACH OTHER...
CYN...
OH GOD, PLEASE, LOVE... DON'T LEAVE ME... DON'T LEAVE ME...
"STEVEN, YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS--"
"YES I DO, MITCH--YES I DO. OTHERWISE I START BELIEVING THAT LINE OF BULLSHIT I FED THEM ABOUT A CRAZY BREAKING IN AND ATTACKING US.
PLEASE... HELP HER... PLEASE...
"OTHERWISE I CLOSE MY EYES AND PRETEND IT NEVER HAPPENED AND ACT LIKE I CAN JUST GO ON WITH OUR WIFE..."
WE STILL HAVE SOME TESTS TO RUN, MR. HILLARD...
BUT WE BELIEVE AT THIS TIME THE BABY WILL BE FINE. WHAT IS YOUR WIFE--ABOUT A MONTH?
BABY...


IT COULDN'T BE YOURS? AND JUST NOT KNOW... WITH YOUR SCHEDULES--
HOW COULD IT? WE HADN'T BEEN ABLE TO FOR MONTHS... NOT WITH MY...
AND SHE WOULDN'T HAVE - NOT CYNTHIA. YOU KNOW HOW CLOSE WE WERE-- ARE. I WOULD'VE KNOWN AND--SHE JUST WOULDN'T HAVE.

THEN WE SEE IF I DID MY HOMEWORK RIGHT.

IT'S CALLED ALL SORTS OF THINGS--ABOUT THE ONLY ONE GOOD FOR MIXED COMPANY IS A "LAMENT CONFIGURATION."
IT'S A--A KEY, IN A WAY. YOU WANT TO BAD ENOUGH, YOU CAN TURN IT... AND THEY COME. WHATEVER "THEY" ARE.

THIS THING OF YOURS, LIKE ANY-GOD, THIS SOUNDS INSANE - "SUPERNATURAL BEING"... THEY'VE GOT LAWS JUST LIKE OURS.
BUT UNLIKE US, THEY DON'T PLAY FAST AND LOOSE -- TO THEM, WHAT'S ON THE BOOKS IS WHAT THEY GO BY. THAT'S GOOD AND BAD...
THAT MEANS WE CAN GET IT TO DO WHAT WE WANT, BUT YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO BE VERY SPECIFIC ABOUT WHAT YOU WANT, OKAY?
UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M--

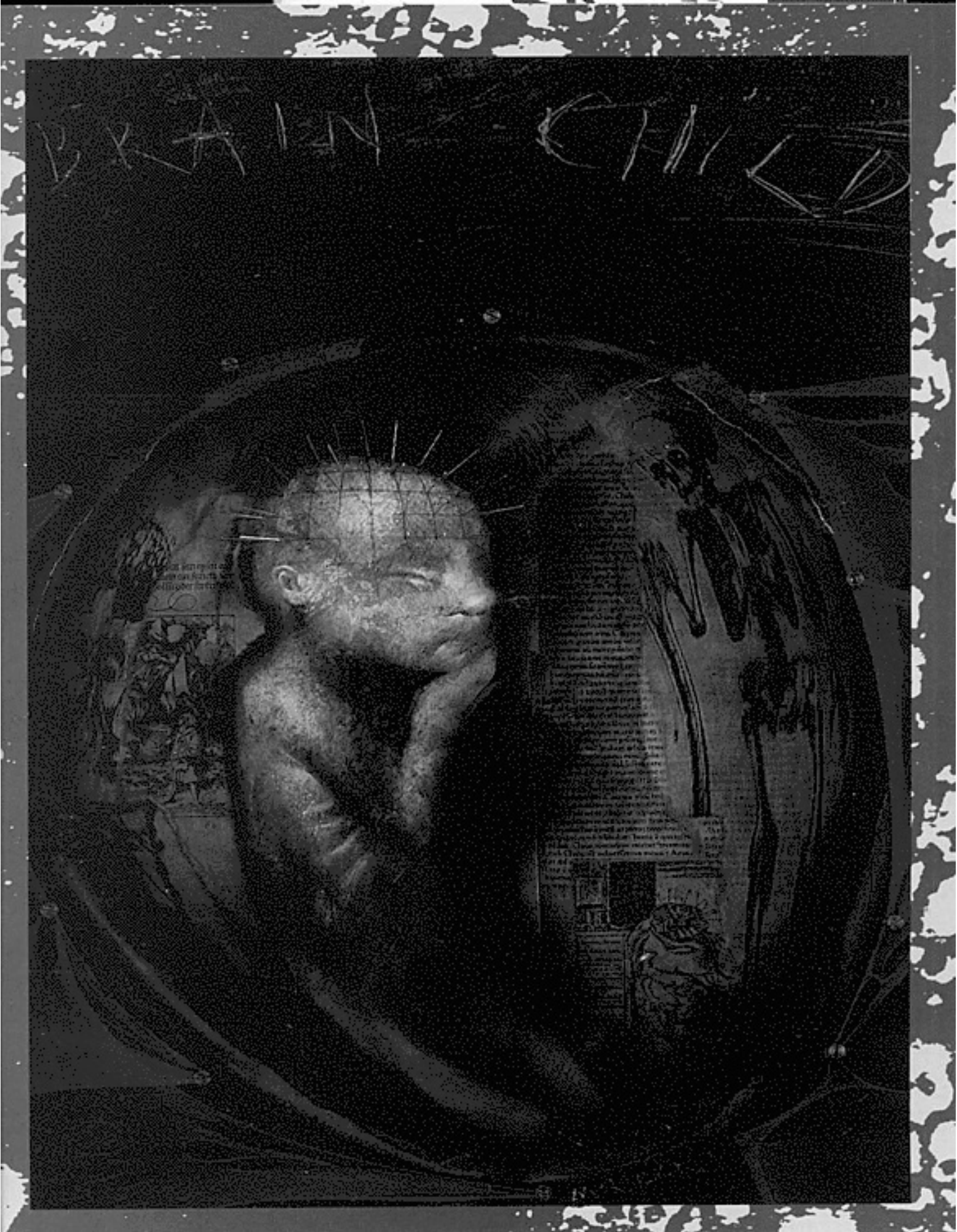
WHATEVER YOU SAY, MITCH, HOWEVER YOU SAY! BUT LET'S JUST DO IT!
EVERY MINUTE SHE SLIPS FURTHER AWAY... AND WHATEVER IT PUT INSIDE HER GETS CLOSER...

SHE'S SO... JUST SKIN AND BONES, ALMOST...
HANG TOUGH, STEVE. IT'LL BE OKAY... SOON, IT'LL BE OKAY...
THERE... THAT'S HOW WE WERE.
AND I...
YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO... FOR HER--
YEAH, OKAY... RIGHT...

FEEL IT, MITCH? MAKE SURE SHE DOES...
SOMETHING'S... IT'S STARTING TO--
THERE! SEE--
THERE IS... NO PLEASURE HERE.
THERE IS... DISSENT... DISORDER...
I DON'T BELIEVE OH STEVE I DIDN'T--
...UNBALANCE.
KRAAK
WHERE'S YOUR GODDAMN HARD-ON NOW, YOU SICK PIECE OF SHIT?!

"LET ME BE YOUR EROS, YOUR CUPID!" LET ME TELL YOU WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO BE--
YOU'RE GOING TO BE TAKING OUT OF HER WHATEVER THE HELL YOU PUT THERE! YOU'RE GONNA PUT HER BACK THE WAY YOU FOUND HER!
SO CAREFULLY... STRUCTURED, THE CIRCLE.
AND YET... SO LITTLE APPRECIATION OF THE GREATER ORDER.
YOU SOUGHT... UNION. DID WE NOT ...ALL SHARE EQUALLY?
ALL..? STEVEN, ASK IT WHAT IT--?
STEVE, BE CAREFUL-- YOU DON'T KNOW EVERY THING IT--
IT'S UNDER CONTROL, MITCH, I'VE GOT IT UNDER CONTROL!
NOW DO IT--MAKE HER RIGHT!
YOUR KIND... FOREVER SEEKING ORDER, THEN... CLINGING TO CHAOS WHEN WE BRING WHAT YOU ASK.
YOU HAVE... YOUR REQUEST... AND NOTHING MORE. SUCH IS THE PRICE OF ABERRATION.

LIVE WITH... YOUR CHAOS, STEVEN HILLARD. AND WHEN ...YOU LEARN THE ERROR OF YOUR WAYS... WE SHALL BE WAITING.
STEVEY... STEVEY, WHAT...
CYNTHIA? CYN! OH, GOD, SWEET LOVE, I'VE MISSED YOU, I'VE MISSED YOU...
DAMN YOU, STEVE, DAMN YOU! WHY DIDN'T YOU LISTEN TO ME?! WHY DIDN'T YOU LISTEN TO IT?!
I TOLD YOU -- THEY HAD LAWS AND RULES AND YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO LISTEN!
SHH. IT'S OKAY, MITCH, IT'S GONE. AND SHE'S OKAY, SHE'S OKAY AND --
ALL THAT CRAP -- ORDER, DISORDER, BALANCE, IMBALANCE -- THAT WASN'T JUST TALK FOR THAT THING! THAT'S WHAT IT IS!
YOU TOLD IT, TAKE CARE OF CYNTHIA, LIKE SHE WAS THE ONLY ONE THERE THAT NIGHT -- BUT THIS THING DOESN'T DO THINGS HALF-ASSED! IT DOESN'T DO THINGS IN HALF AT ALL -- THAT WOULD BE UNEQUAL, CHAOTIC.
MITCH, FOR GOD'S SAKE, WHAT ARE YOU --
DON'T YOU SEE WHAT IT DID? IT RAPED YOU BOTH, STEVEN.
AND ANY DAY NOW YOU SHOULD FEEL THE FIRST KICK.


BRAIN CHILD

STALKERS

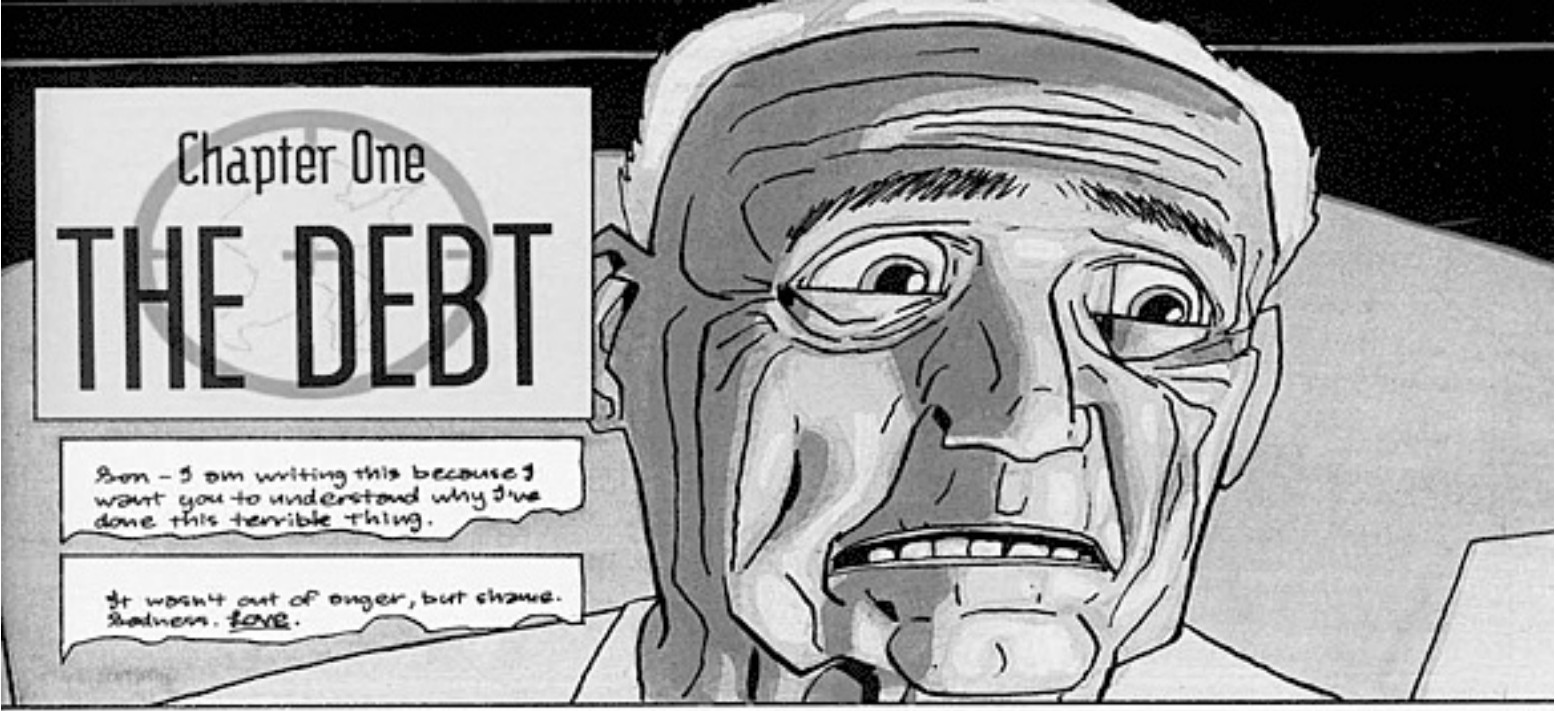
Created by
Mark Verheiden and Jan Strnad

In the next few decades, nationalized industries will become a thing of the past. You'll be able to buy into anything you feel will strengthen your portfolio. Energy, Industry, the Military. Even Law and Order.

A sound investment in this particular market are the Stalkers. Part SWAT team, part Special Forces, part showmen, this elite team is called on to deal with those really dirty jobs; the sort of scenarios where hostage's lives are at stake, where the likelihood of a shooting match runs far above average. For these are dangerous times, especially if you're a hostage; when the establishment has zero tolerance for terrorism; where the policy for the paramilitary is 'shoot first, ask questions later'. As for the hostages, well, you can't make an omelette without cracking a few eggs, huh?

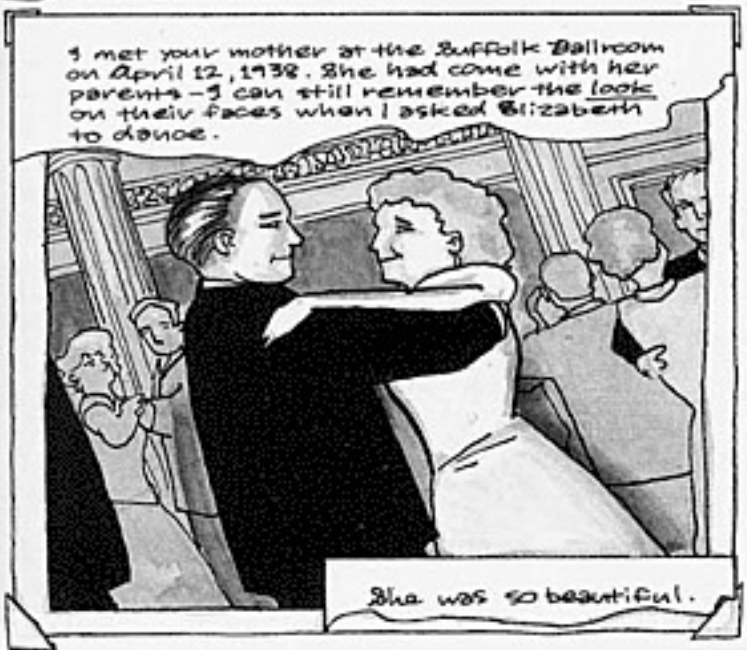
This is the situation facing Matt Raines, Stalker Boss. He knows that every time he goes into action, the Grim Reaper will be hugging his shoulder, while stock brokers and the financial watchdogs on Wall Street monitor the rise and fall of share prices according to the success of his missions.

Still, if a messed-up assault means you have to re-mortgage your house, you can always take solace in any number of items from the extensive line of Stalkers merchandise. Stalkers — where anti-terrorism is big business.


Chapter One
THE DEBT
Son – I am writing this because I want you to understand why I've done this terrible thing.
It wasn't out of anger, but shame. Sadness. Love.

I grew up in the '30's during the Great Depression. I was just a child then – I never understood the cold economics of the crash.
July 4 1933
I only knew that the world had changed. My father lost everything.

I remember the despair in his eyes, the pain that came with the wondering – would we have food that day? Would we be able to keep our home?

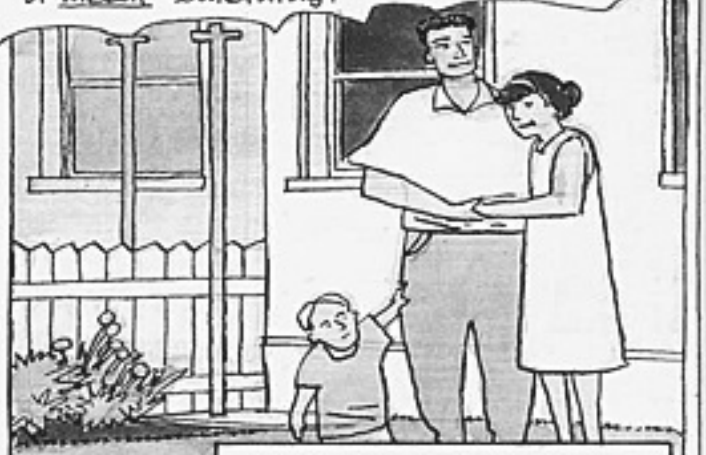

I met your mother at the Suffolk Ballroom on April 12, 1938. She had come with her parents – I can still remember the look on their faces when I asked Elizabeth to dance.
She was so beautiful.

I knew from the moment I saw her that one day she'd be my wife.
I loved her more than anything.

I started with the Capitol Motor Car Company on August 23, 1946. Those were the days when a man felt a sense of loyalty and allegiance to his company.

Work hard and they would take care of you.

We bought the house and raised you the best we could. We weren't rich, but you never went without. That was important. It meant something.



Some people call what we had 'the American Dream.'

You'll be amazed how fast time passes by. One day, you're a young man, with your entire life ahead of you.

The next day you're old, looking forward to simpler pleasures.

We always saved. We wanted something for our retirement - a little extra to ease the burden of our closing years.

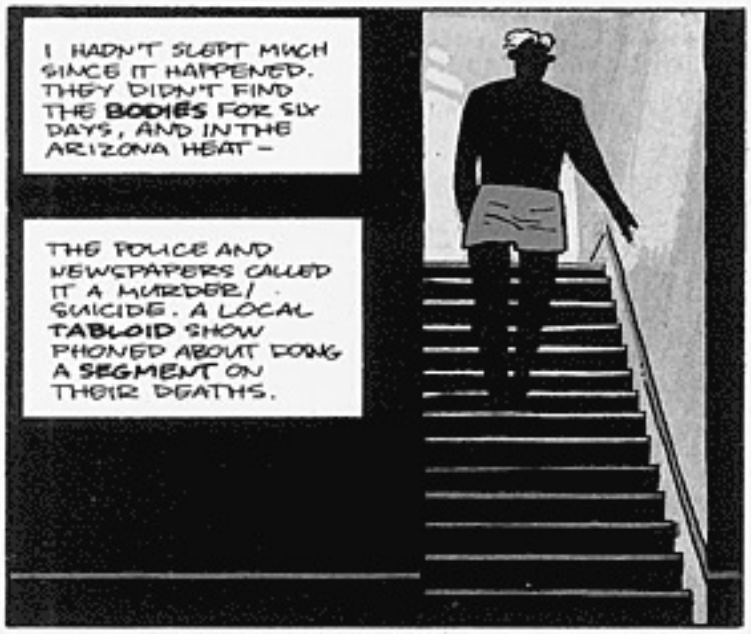
Capitol laid me off two years before I made pension — 'cost cutting' they said. Loyalty - allegiance — it meant nothing.

The man at the bank suggested we put our savings into a special, high yield "investment" account. We assumed it was just like our regular savings account.

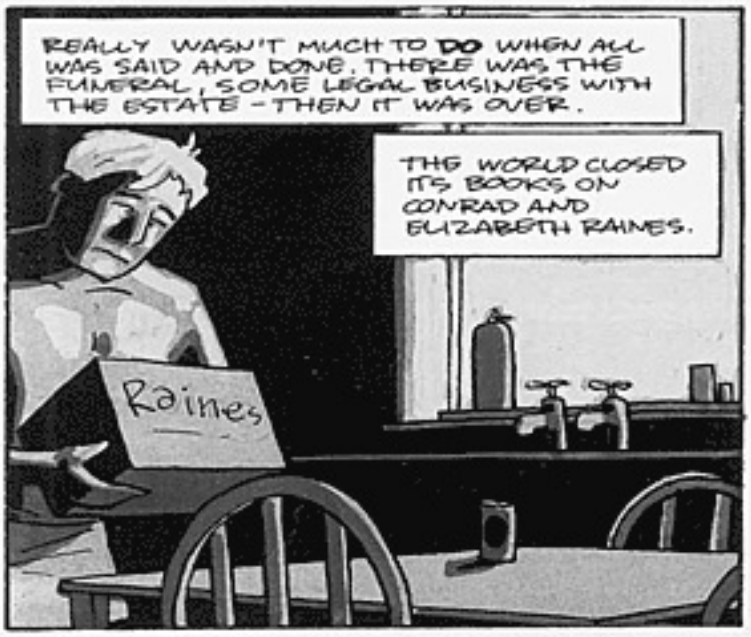
With my pension gone, we were desperate.

Maybe it was my fault, Matthew. Lord knows I never understood the legal terms — insured, uninsured —

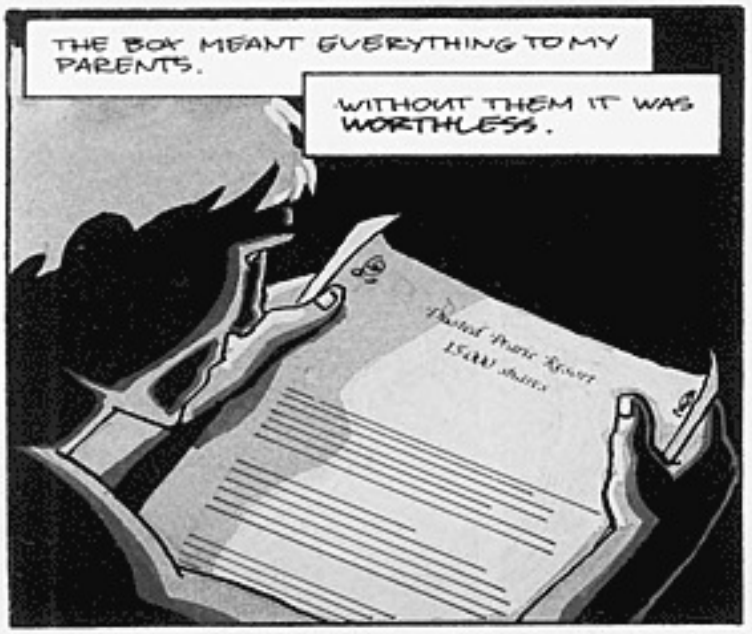
All I know is they stole everything we had. Years of scrimping and saving vanished with the scratch of a rich man's pen.
They managed to put my father's pain into my eyes.
How could I tell Elizabeth we had nothing? How could I tell anyone?
You probably won't understand this, but when you're old, all you have is your dignity - your self-respect.
It wasn't losing the money that hurt so much as the cruelty of the theft.
Don't despair, son, and don't hate me for what I've done. It was for the best.
I know we've had our problems, but your mother and I love you - we'll always love y-
NO!
OH GOD -
WHY, DAD - WHY?


I HADN'T SLEPT MUCH SINCE IT HAPPENED. THEY DIDN'T FIND THE **BODIES** FOR SIX DAYS, AND IN THE ARIZONA HEAT –
THE POLICE AND NEWSPAPERS CALLED IT A MURDER/ SUICIDE. A LOCAL **TABLOID** SHOW PHONED ABOUT DOING A **SEGMENT** ON THEIR DEATHS.

I TOLD THE PRODUCER THAT IF SHE CAME ANYWHERE NEAR ME, I'D **KILL** HER.

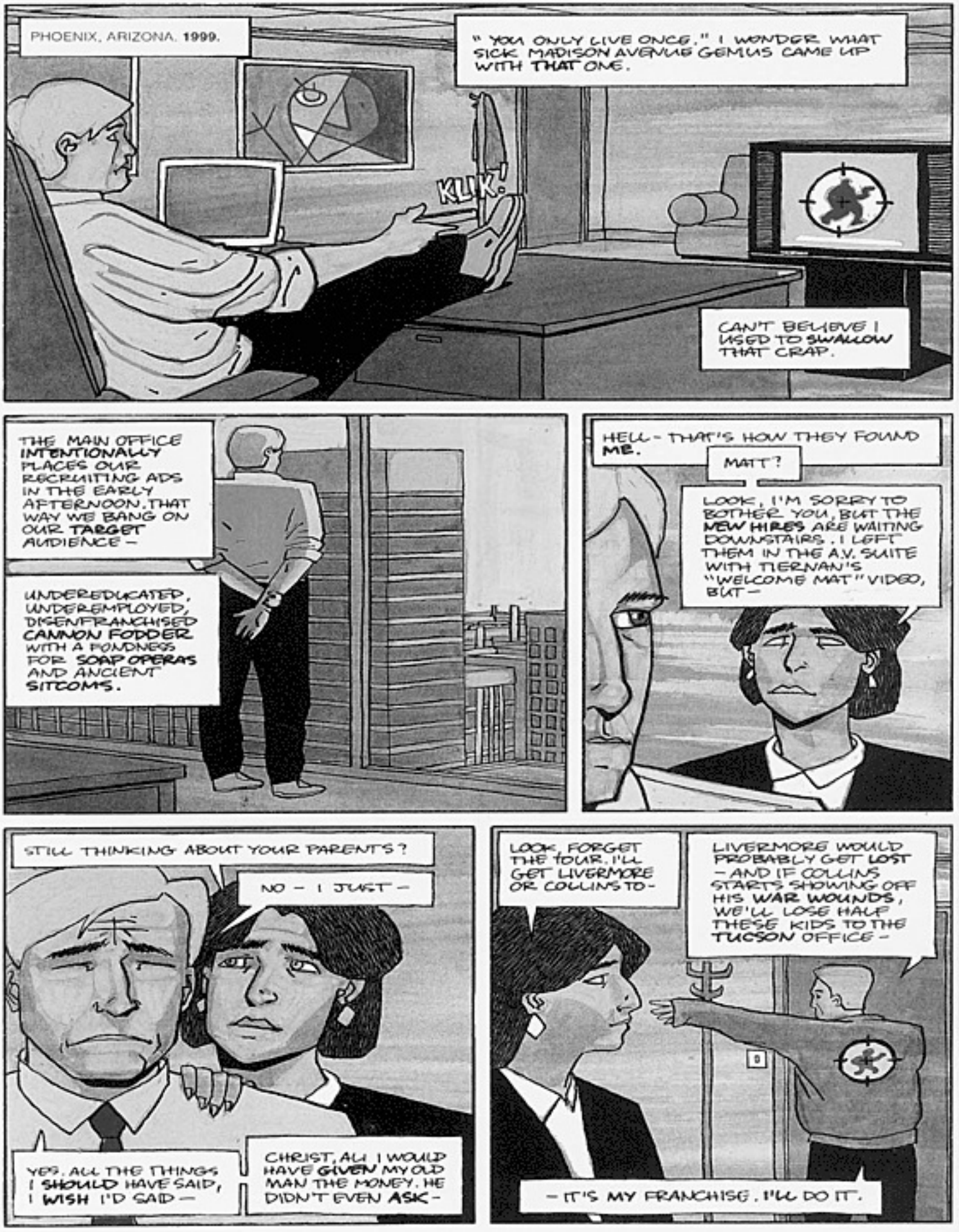

REALLY WASN'T MUCH TO **DO** WHEN ALL WAS SAID AND DONE. THERE WAS THE FUNERAL, SOME LEGAL BUSINESS WITH THE ESTATE – THEN IT WAS OVER.
THE WORLD CLOSED ITS BOOKS ON CONRAD AND ELIZABETH RAINES.
Raines

THE BANK SENT OVER THE CONTENTS OF THEIR SAFETY DEPOSIT BOX NOT LONG AFTER IT HAPPENED. FUNNY THE THINGS PEOPLE **TREASURE** IN LIFE.
A LOCK OF BABY'S HAIR. CLIPPINGS ABOUT LONG FORGOTTEN WEDDINGS AND SPORTING EVENTS. SOMEONE'S WORN "LUCKY QUARTER!"

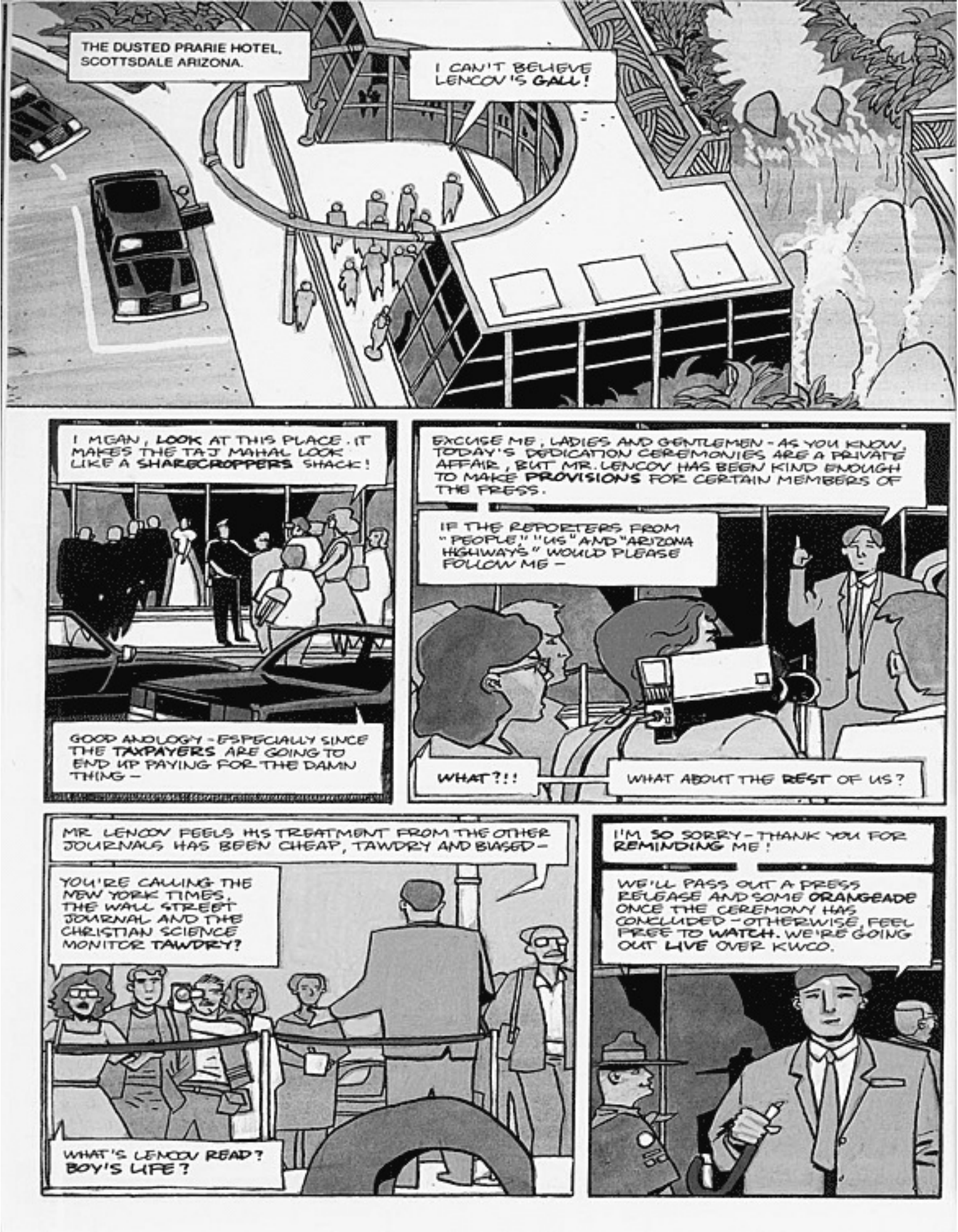

THE BOX MEANT EVERYTHING TO MY PARENTS.
WITHOUT THEM IT WAS **WORTHLESS**.

WORTHLESS.

THE FEW — !
UP AGAINST THE WALL, PUNK!
NGHHHH!
THE PROUD—!
YEAH!
THE DEADLY—!
THAT'S RIGHT — IN JUST TEN SHORT WEEKS YOU COULD BE SEEING SERIOUS COMBAT ACTION.
GOOD BENEFITS, TOP WAGES, A CUSTOM MADE BADGE — IT'S MORE THAN A JOB — IT'S TAKE-NO-PRISONERS EXCITEMENT!
SO CALL NOW, AND PREPARE FOR THE CAREER OF A LIFETIME —
— 'CAUSE YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE!
800 123 45


PHOENIX, ARIZONA. 1999.
"YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE." I WONDER WHAT SICK MADISON AVENUE GENIUS CAME UP WITH THAT ONE.
KLIK!
CAN'T BELIEVE I USED TO SWALLOW THAT CRAP.
THE MAIN OFFICE INTENTIONALLY PLACES OUR RECRUITING ADS IN THE EARLY AFTERNOON. THAT WAY WE BANG ON OUR TARGET AUDIENCE –
UNDEREDUCATED, UNDEREMPLOYED, DISENFRANCHISED CANNON FODDER WITH A PONDNESS FOR SOAP OPERAS AND ANCIENT SITCOMS.
HELL – THAT'S HOW THEY FOUND ME.
MATT?
LOOK, I'M SORRY TO BOTHER YOU, BUT THE NEW HIRES ARE WAITING DOWNSTAIRS. I LEFT THEM IN THE A.V. SUITE WITH TIERNAN'S "WELCOME MAT" VIDEO, BUT –
STILL THINKING ABOUT YOUR PARENTS?
NO – I JUST –
YEP. ALL THE THINGS I SHOULD HAVE SAID, I WISH I'D SAID –
CHRIST, ALI, I WOULD HAVE GIVEN MY OLD MAN THE MONEY. HE DIDN'T EVEN ASK –
LOOK, FORGET THE TOUR. I'LL GET LIVERMORE OR COLLINS TO –
LIVERMORE WOULD PROBABLY GET LOST – AND IF COLLINS STARTS SHOWING OFF HIS WAR WOUNDS, WE'LL LOSE HALF THESE KIDS TO THE TUCSON OFFICE –
– IT'S MY FRANCHISE. I'LL DO IT.

STALKERS INC! THE FRONT LINE IN THE WAR AGAINST INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM.
CARTER TIERNAN C.E.O., STALKERS INC.
YOU'VE JOINED A ROUGH AND TUMBLE TEAM WITH THE BEST SUCCESS RECORD IN THE WORLD. WHEN THE STALKERS GO IN, WE MEAN BUSINESS.
IN OTHER WORDS, WE KILL EVERYTHING IN SIGHT.
IF CREATIVE EUPHEMISM WERE HIGH ART, TIERNAN WOULD MAKE PICASSO LOOK LIKE A HOUSE PAINTER.
WE'RE NOT THE MILITARY AND WE'RE NOT THE POLICE - NO, YOU'VE JOINED A SPECIAL, FRANCHISED FORCE THAT OPERATES ON ONE SIMPLE PRINCIPLE -
- MOVE FAST, KICK ASS AND TAKE 'EM OUT.
SOUNDS LIKE MY LAST DATE.
KEEP TALKING AND IT'LL BE YOUR VERY LAST.
WHEN YOU'RE IN THE FIELD, YOU COUNT ON YOUR GUN AND YOUR BUDDY. IT'S THAT CAMARADERIE UNDER FIRE THAT GIVES US THE EDGE.
YEAH? 'SCUSE ME IF I DON'T FAINT, BUT YOU'RE ABOUT AS SCARY AS A THIRD GRADER WITH A PEA-SHOOT—
BELIEVE ME, YOU'LL MAKE SOME CLOSE FRIENDS IN STALKERS—
I DON'T KNOW - I WAS PRETTY DAMN MEAN IN THE THIRD GRADE -
- AND AS FAR AS SCARY'S CONCERNED WHY DON'T YOU SNIFF ON THIS A WHILE -
WHOA, WHOA, WHOA-
FRIENDS YOU'LL KEEP THE REST OF YOUR LIFE!
IF YOU'RE GOING TO KILL EACH OTHER, DO IT ON YOUR OWN TIME-
YOU'RE ON OUR CLOCK NOW AND YOU'LL DIE WHEN YOU'RE TOLD.


THE DUSTED PRARIE HOTEL, SCOTTSDALE ARIZONA.
I CAN'T BELIEVE LENCOV'S GALL!
I MEAN, LOOK AT THIS PLACE. IT MAKES THE TAJ MAHAL LOOK LIKE A SHARECROPPERS SHACK!
GOOD ANOLOGY - ESPECIALLY SINCE THE TAXPAYERS ARE GOING TO END UP PAYING FOR THE DAMN THING -
EXCUSE ME, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN - AS YOU KNOW, TODAY'S DEDICATION CEREMONIES ARE A PRIVATE AFFAIR, BUT MR. LENCOV HAS BEEN KIND ENOUGH TO MAKE PROVISIONS FOR CERTAIN MEMBERS OF THE PRESS.
IF THE REPORTERS FROM "PEOPLE" "US" AND "ARIZONA HIGHWAYS" WOULD PLEASE FOLLOW ME -
WHAT?!!
WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF US?
MR. LENCOV FEELS HIS TREATMENT FROM THE OTHER JOURNALS HAS BEEN CHEAP, TAWDRY AND BIASED -
YOU'RE CALLING THE NEW YORK TIMES, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL AND THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR TAWDRY?
WHAT'S LENCOV READ? BOY'S LIFE?
I'M SO SORRY - THANK YOU FOR REMINDING ME!
WE'LL PASS OUT A PRESS RELEASE AND SOME ORANGEADE ONCE THE CEREMONY HAS CONCLUDED - OTHERWISE, FEEL FREE TO WATCH. WE'RE GOING OUT LIVE OVER KWCO.

YOUR SPEECH IS SET IN THE PROMPTER, SIMKINS HAS TAKEN CARE OF THE PRESS - ANYTHING ELSE, MR. LENCOV?
NO, GOVER. VERY GOOD.
ITALIAN MARBLE, HAND GROUND TO MY PERSONAL SPECIFICATIONS. BEAUTIFUL, SIMPLY BEAUTIFUL.
TO THINK THERE WERE THOSE WHO OPPOSED THIS FACILITY. IMAGINE THE BEAUTY THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN LOST.
MR. LENCOV - YOU'RE ON -!
THANK YOU BOB, AND THANKS ALL OF YOU FOR COMING.
THIS IS INDEED A GRAND MOMENT IN ARIZONA'S PROUD HISTORY.
EIGHT YEARS AGO, I HAD A DREAM. A DREAM TO BRING LUXURY AND GRANDEUR TO THE ARID ARIZONA DESERT.
<SLURRRRPPP!>
- YEAH - BECAUSE THE LAND WAS DIRT CHEAP AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY HAD ABOUT AS MUCH CLOUT AS THE KEYSTONE COPS -
THERE WERE ANY NUMBER OF SMALL MINDED OFFICIALS WHO STOOD IN THE WAY - THEY SAID IT WOULD COST TOO MUCH, THEY SAID IT WAS UNNECESSARY -
I ASK YOU - WHERE ARE THOSE DOUBTERS TODAY?
PROBABLY SCRUBBING FLOORS AT THE LOCAL TACO BELL AFTER YOU THREW A HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS AT THEIR "WORTHY OPPONENTS" -
- WHOA - WHAT'S THIS -

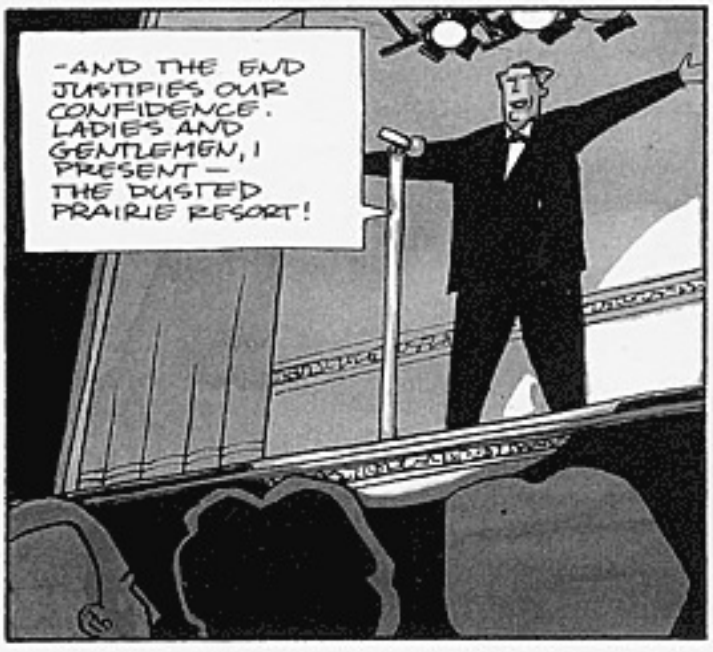
GIVE US BACK OUR SAVINGS!
THE SENIOR BRIGADE WANTS TO KNOW - WHAT ABOUT OUR HOMES?
LENCOV STOLE OUR MONEY!
FIXH PRATE
SENIOR BRIGADE?
C'MON PATRICK - LET'S ROLL!

IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY, WE HAVE PERSEVERED. WHEN THE BANK BOARD RAISED THE OLD CANARD ABOUT UNSOUND INVESTMENT, WE DID THE ONLY PRUDENT THING POSSIBLE TO SAVE THE PROJECT.

WHAT EXACTLY IS YOUR GRIEVANCE WITH MR. LENCOV?
GRIEVANCE? THE SON OF A BITCH STOLE OUR MONEY!

- AND DECLARED CONDITIONAL BANKRUPTCY.
IN THE LONG RUN, WE BECAME STRONGER -

A THIEF COMES INTO YOUR HOUSE AND IT'S CALLED ROBBERY! LENCOV DISAPPEARS WITH OUR SAVINGS AND THEY CALL IT "DEFAULT."
THIS "HOTEL" IS A TEMPLE TO LENCOV'S GREED! THEY SHOULD NUKE THE WHOLE DAMN PLACE!


- AND THE END JUSTIFIES OUR CONFIDENCE. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, I PRESENT - THE DUSTED PRAIRIE RESORT!

GIVE US BACK OUR SAVINGS!
LEMME SEE THAT MONEY!
THE SENATE BUREAUCRAT WANTS TO KNOW - WHAT ABOUT OUR HOMES?
ALL RIGHT, THAT'S FAR ENOUGH -
- WE DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU OLD COOTS!
COME ON, NOW - STAY BEHIND THE LINE OR WE'LL CALL THE POLICE -
YOU CAN CALL THE POLICE -
BUT NOBODY CALLS US COOTS!
KSSSSH!
YOU CAN CALL THE NATIONAL GUARD -
WE'RE IN AND WE'RE BLOODED TELL THE OTHERS.

WHAT IS IT, SIMKINS?
SIR, THERE'S BEEN SOME SORT OF DISTURBANCE IN THE LOBBY.
GOYER'S DEALING WITH THE SECURITY PROBLEM, BUT I'VE ARRANGED FOR A CAR TO RETURN YOU TO PHOENIX HEADQUARTERS.
MY GOD - DON'T TELL ME SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO MY HOTEL -
BA-WHAMMM!
WHAT - WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?
THAT DOOR WAS MADE OF CARVED OAK - IT COST THOUSANDS -
THAT'S THE PROBLEM.
YOU'RE LOOKING AT THE SOLUTION!
NEXT ISSUE: HIGH FALLUTIN' STALKERS ACTION!

DREADLANDS

Created by
Steve White and Andy Lanning

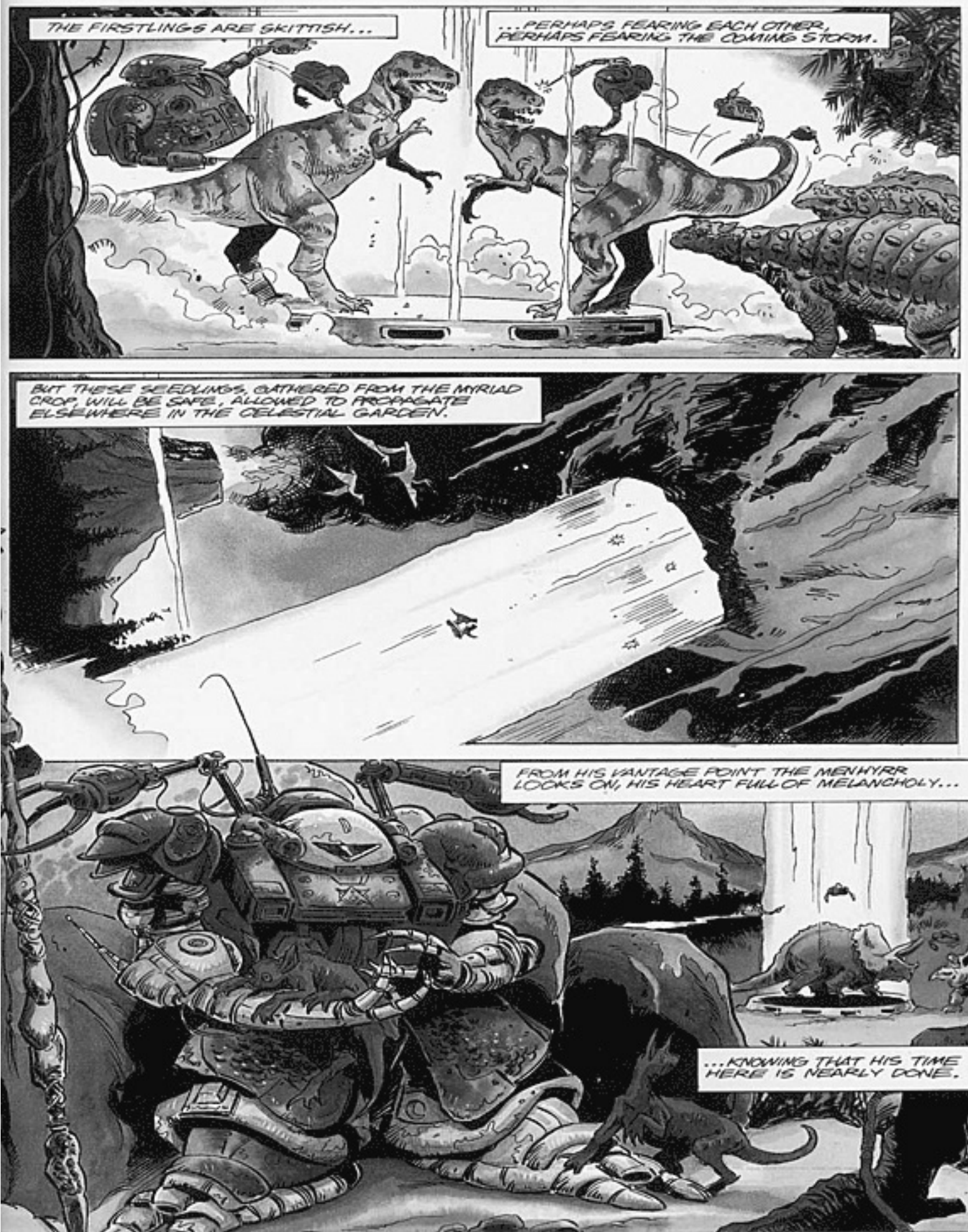
The not-too-distant future. The world is in ecological ruin. Mankind's once-proud civilization lies in tatters. War, strife, mass sterility and hunger have conspired to bring the human race to its knees. Yet, amid the chaos, there could be hope.

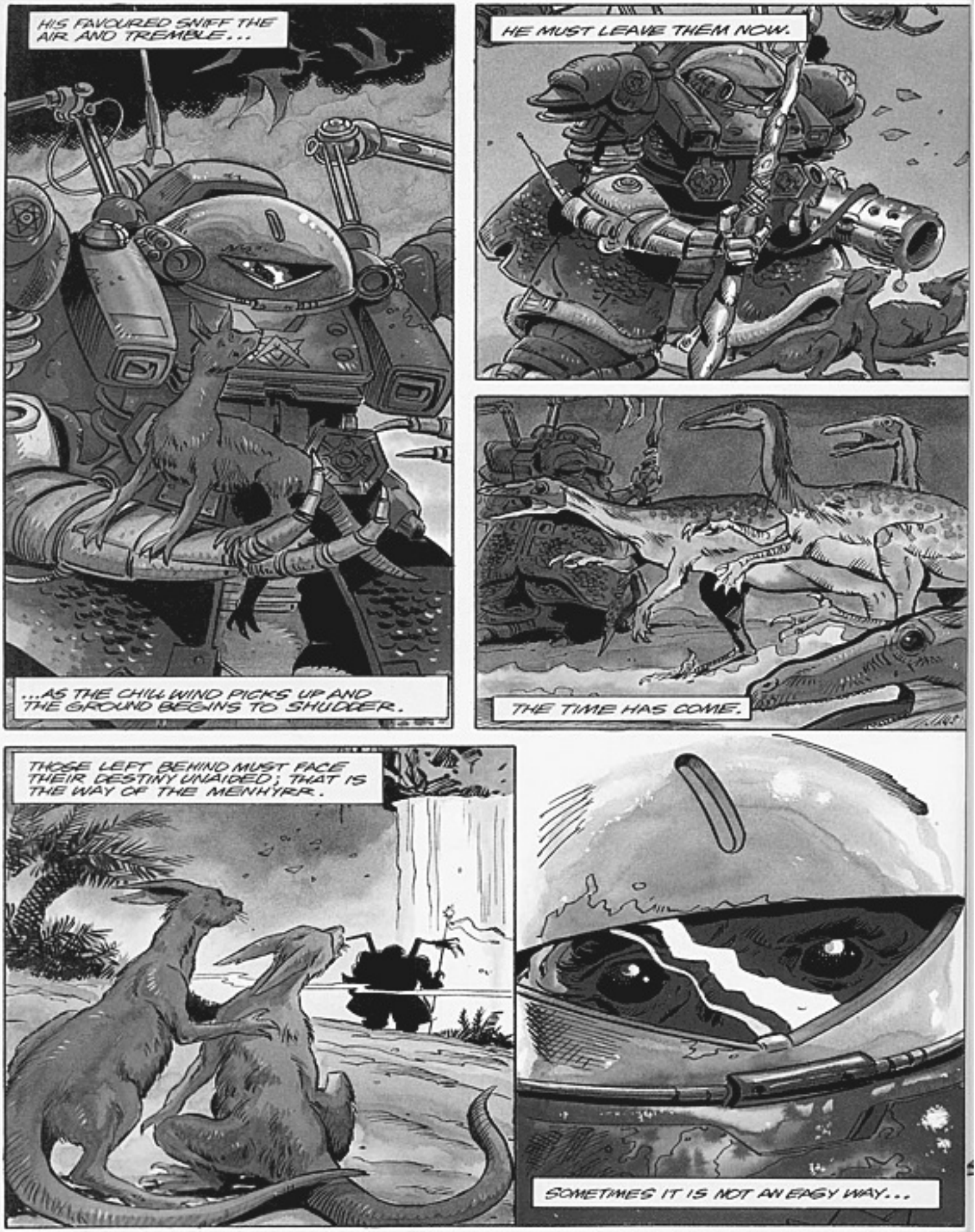
Deep underground, a group of scientists, engineers and soldiers struggle to develop crops and livestock capable of surviving the nightmare world above. They are also working on refining the near- limitless supply of energy provided by ball lightning. A rather interesting side-effect of this research has been the discovery of a possible method of time travel. However, before this can be effectively tested, the base is attacked by a horde of scavengers and renegades. Faced with being overrun, captured and tortured, a handful of surviving scientists and their protectors decide to risk using the untried time machine and 'jump' six months into the future. However, lightning destroys the machine's systems and the cadre is hurled 150 million years into the past.

They now find themselves trapped in a world where they must fight for survival in a time when the dynasty of the Dinosaurs was at the height of its power. Soon, they are not only fighting dinosaurs, huge crocodiles and a crippling drought, but themselves as the thin veneer of civilization is stripped away.

However, the real struggle begins when one day, the sunrise casts its light on the crystalline flanks of an awesome spaceship. The vessel belongs to a race of galaxy-trotting aliens called the Menhyrr. . .

NORTH AMERICA, 65 MILLION YEARS AGO...
THE TRUMPET VOLLEYS OF HADROSAURS AND THE GRUFF SNORTINGS OF THE TRICERATOPS BLEND WITH THE MYSTIC HUM AND WHIR OF THE SERVANT DROIDS AS THEY GATHER THE FINAL HARVEST.
THERE IS A SENSE OF URGENCY IN THEIR TOILING. TIME IS SHORT.

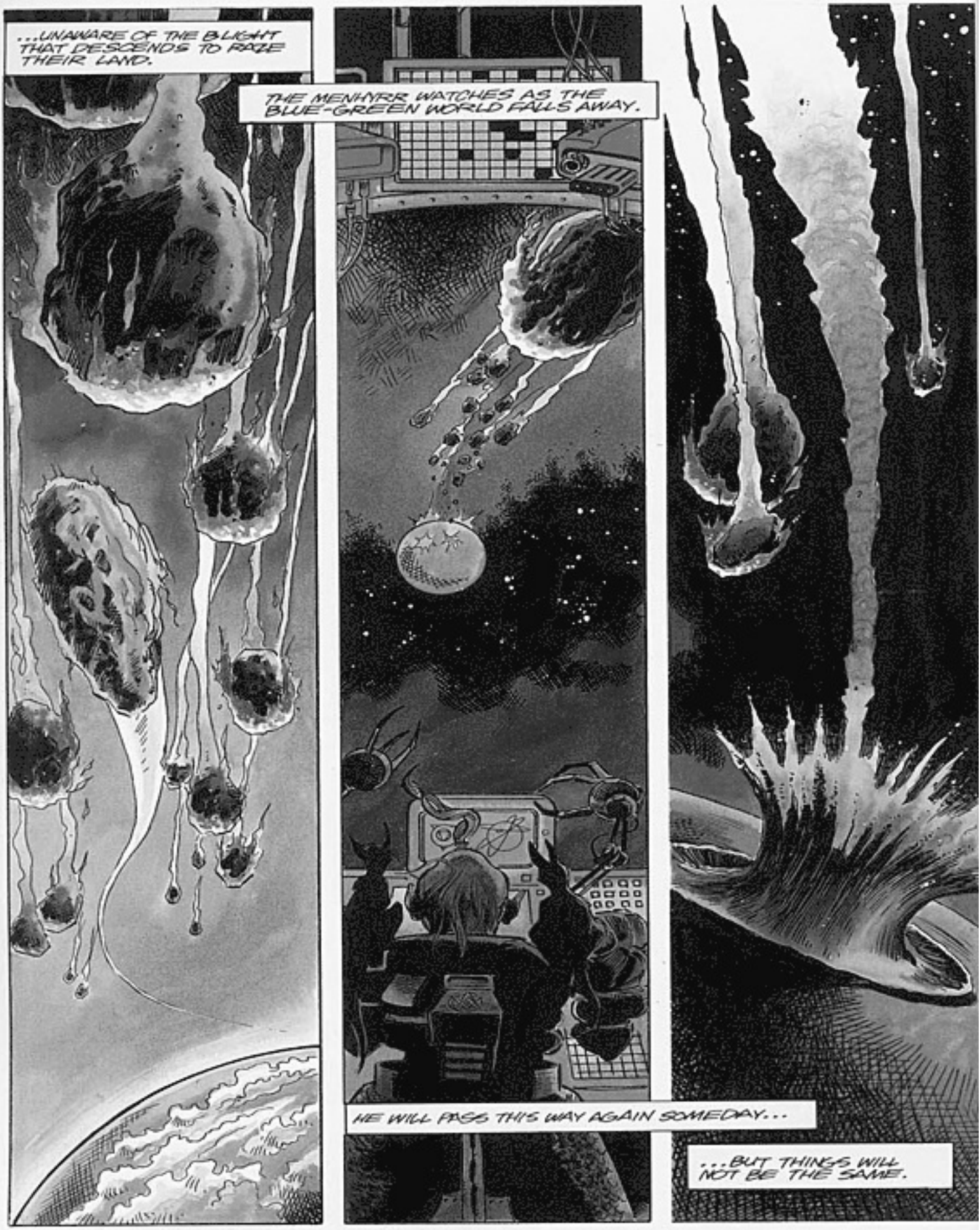

THE FIRSTLINGS ARE SKITTISH...
...PERHAPS FEARING EACH OTHER, PERHAPS FEARING THE COMING STORM.
BUT THESE SEEDLINGS, GATHERED FROM THE MYRIAD CROP, WILL BE SAFE, ALLOWED TO PROPAGATE ELSEWHERE IN THE CELESTIAL GARDEN.
FROM HIS VANTAGE POINT THE MENHYRR LOOKS ON, HIS HEART FULL OF MELANCHOLY...
...KNOWING THAT HIS TIME HERE IS NEARLY DONE.

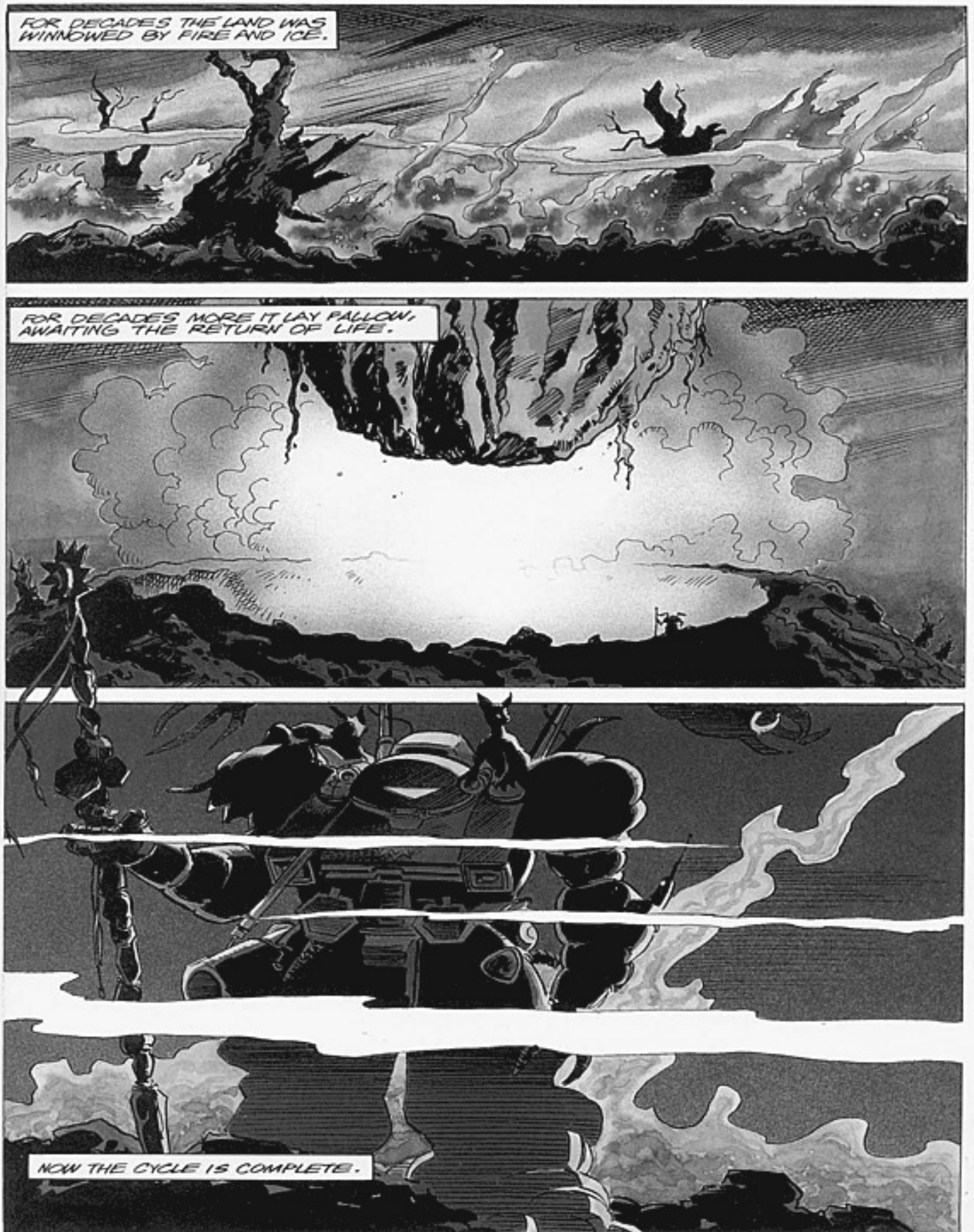

HIS FAVOURED SNIFF THE AIR AND TREMBLE...
...AS THE CHILL WIND PICKS UP AND THE GROUND BEGINS TO SHUDDER.
HE MUST LEAVE THEM NOW.
THE TIME HAS COME.
THOSE LEFT BEHIND MUST FACE THEIR DESTINY UNAIDED; THAT IS THE WAY OF THE MENHYRR.
SOMETIMES IT IS NOT AN EASY WAY...

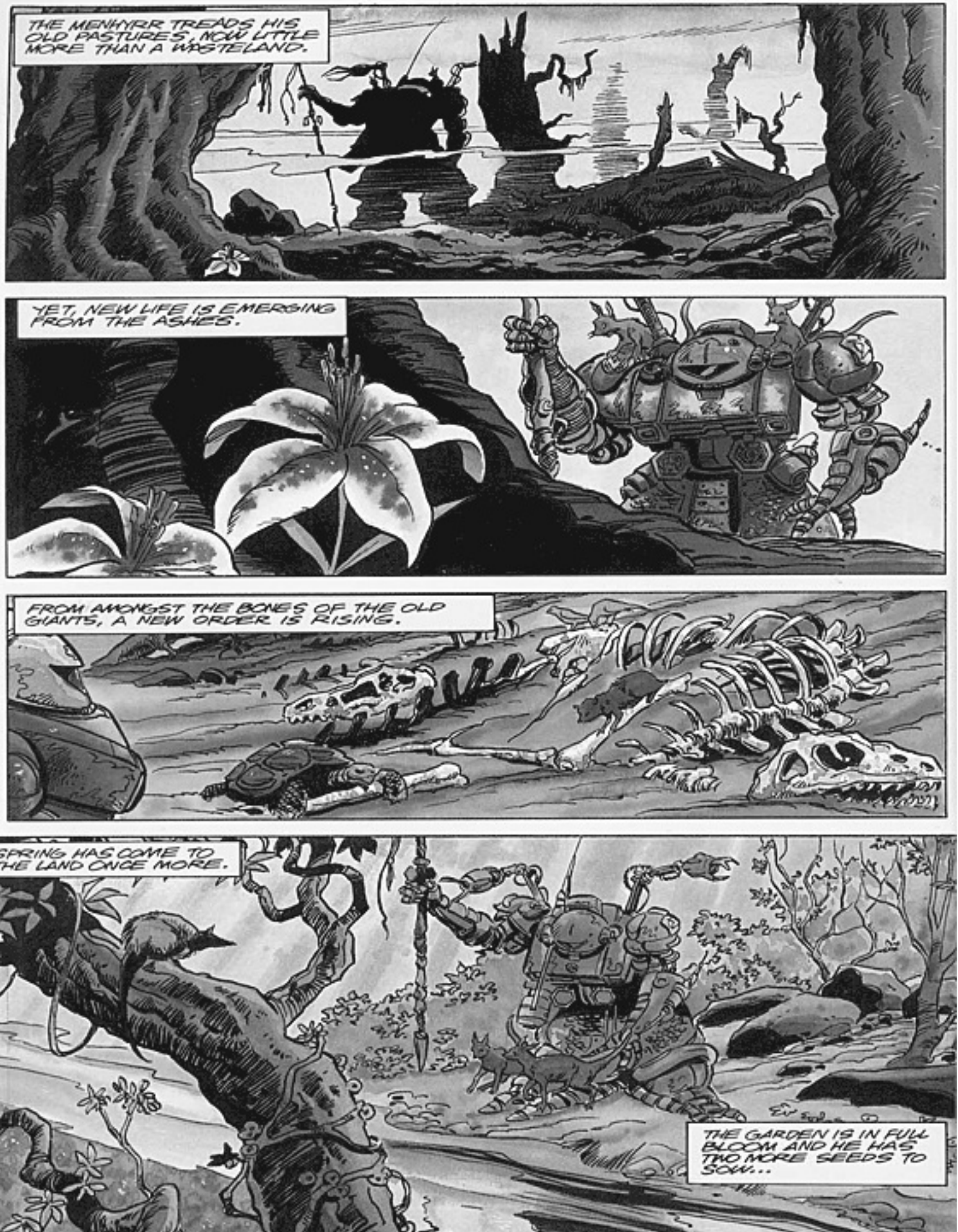
THE HUGE LOADING PLATFORM GLIDES SMOOTHLY INTO THE BELLY OF THE SHIP CARRYING THE MAMMALS AND THEIR PROTECTOR TO SAFETY.
THE MENHYRR KNOWS THAT IN THE SHORELESS OCEANS OF TIME, TWO SMALL DROPS WILL BARELY CAST A RIPPLE.

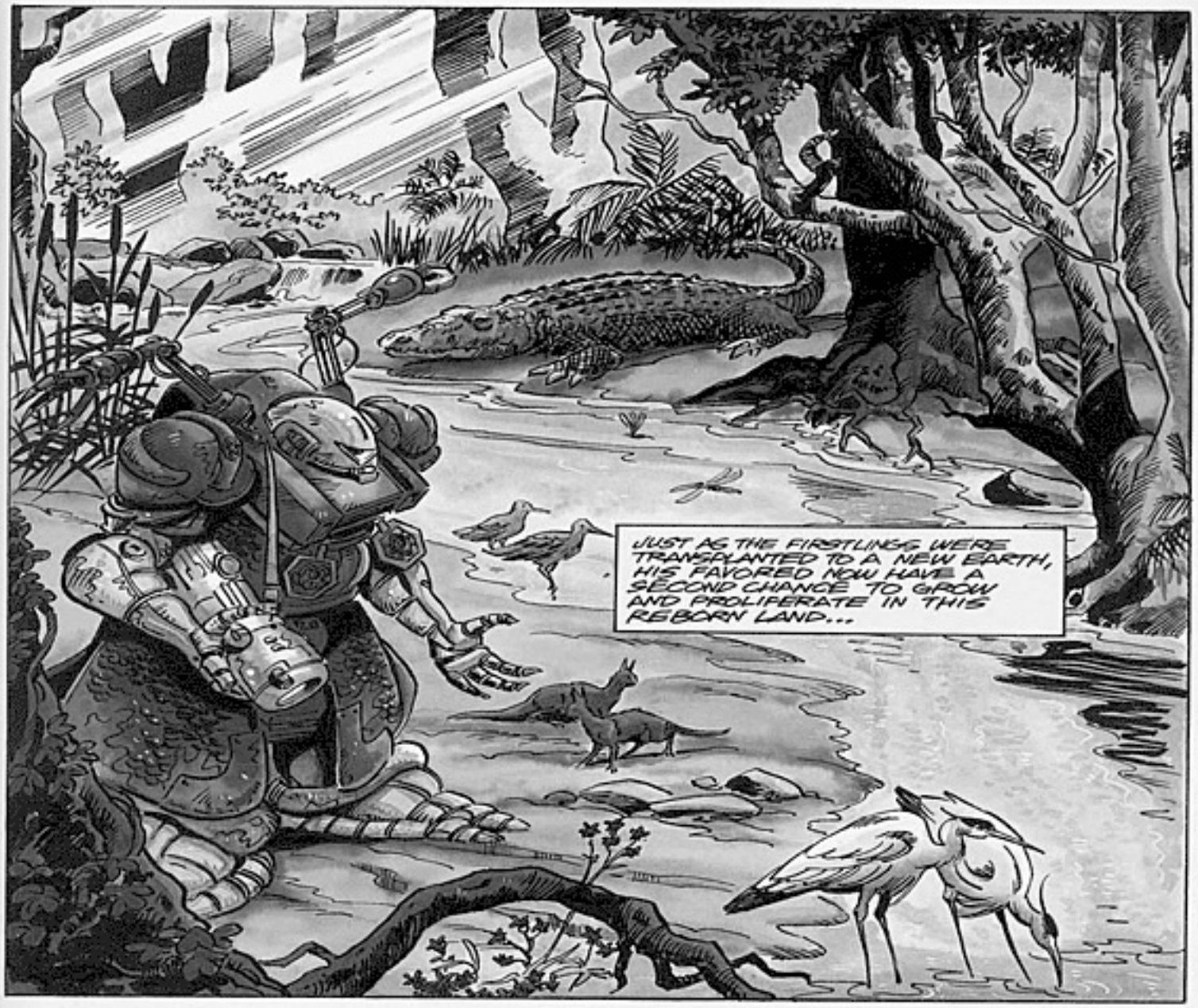
JUST AS HE KNOWS THAT HE COULD NOT BEAR TO LEAVE THEM BEHIND AT THE MERCY OF THE CATACLYSMIC WINTER THAT APPROACHES.

INSIDE THEIR NURSERIES, THE FIRSTLINGS ARE AT EASE, TRANQUIL AMONGST FAMILIAR SURROUNDINGS...


...UNAWARE OF THE BLIGHT THAT DESCENDS TO RAZE THEIR LAND.
THE MENHYRR WATCHES AS THE BLUE-GREEN WORLD FALLS AWAY.
HE WILL PASS THIS WAY AGAIN SOMEDAY...
...BUT THINGS WILL NOT BE THE SAME.

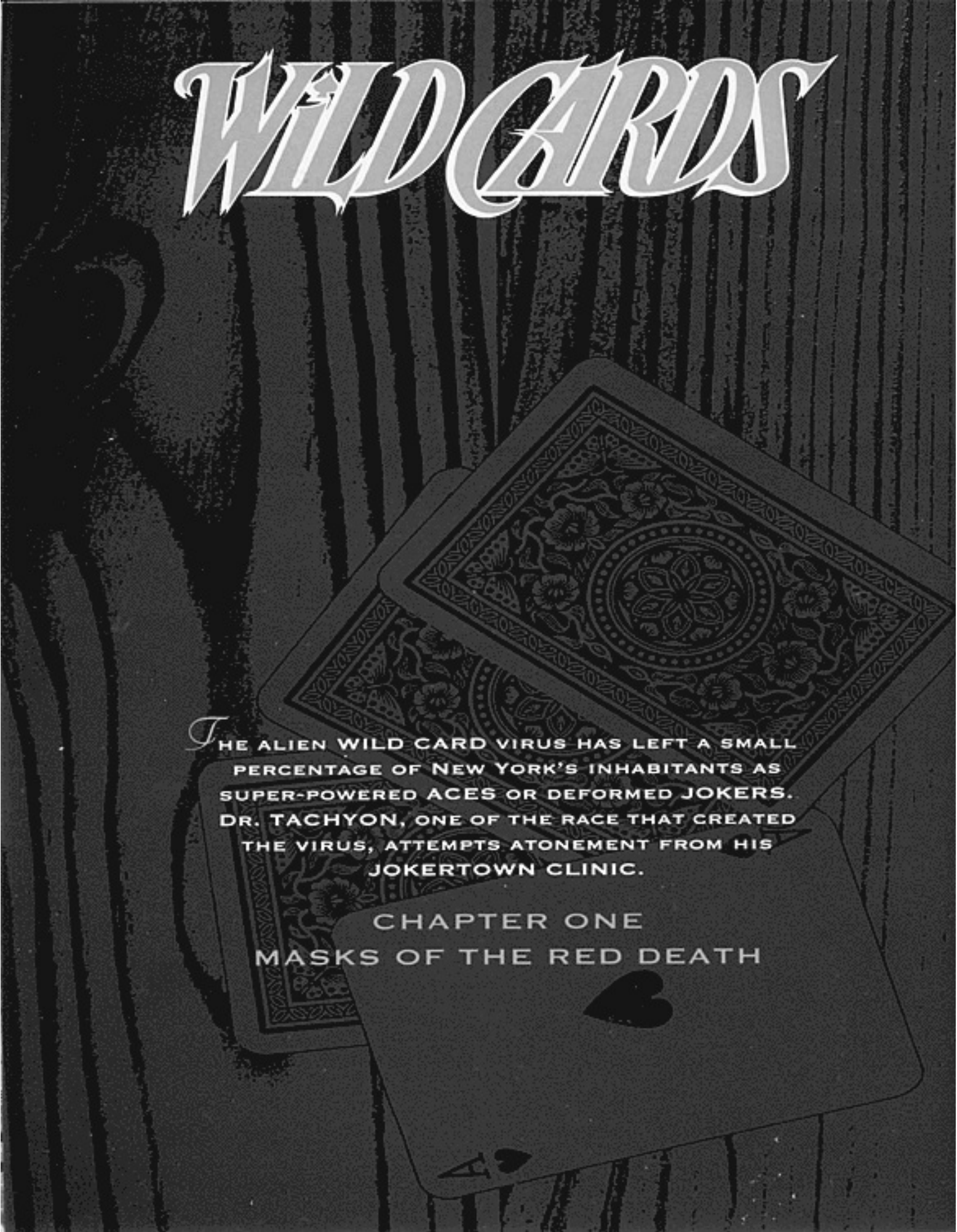

FOR DECADES THE LAND WAS WINNOWED BY FIRE AND ICE.
FOR DECADES MORE IT LAY FALLOW, AWAITING THE RETURN OF LIFE.
NOW THE CYCLE IS COMPLETE.


THE MENHYRR TREADS HIS OLD PASTURES, NOW LITTLE MORE THAN A WASTELAND.
YET, NEW LIFE IS EMERGING FROM THE ASHES.
FROM AMONGST THE BONES OF THE OLD GIANTS, A NEW ORDER IS RISING.
SPRING HAS COME TO THE LAND ONCE MORE.
THE GARDEN IS IN FULL BLOOM AND HE HAS TWO MORE SEEDS TO SOW...


JUST AS THE FIRSTLINGS WERE TRANSPLANTED TO A NEW EARTH, HIS FAVORED NOW HAVE A SECOND CHANCE TO GROW AND PROLIFERATE IN THIS REBORN LAND...

AND, IN TIME, THERE WILL BE A NEW HARVEST...
..!.FOR THE MEEK SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH...!

WILD CARDS



THE ALIEN WILD CARD VIRUS HAS LEFT A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF NEW YORK'S INHABITANTS AS SUPER-POWERED ACES OR DEFORMED JOKERS. DR. TACHYON, ONE OF THE RACE THAT CREATED THE VIRUS, ATTEMPTS ATONEMENT FROM HIS JOKERTOWN CLINIC.

CHAPTER ONE
MASKS OF THE RED DEATH

Dr. Tachyon's Secret Journal
November 7, 1988
It was only a few months ago that I discovered the monster inside Senator Gregg Hartmann, failed Presidential candidate and alleged friend to the victims of the Wild Card.
It is a monster that regards human beings as no more than puppets, that thrives on their pain.
I know now that this monster caused the Jokertown Riot of 1976. But what other violence and mayhem might be laid at his feet?

I've been thinking tonight of two years ago, when the Oriental drug lord Kien and his Shadow Fist Society battled the Mafia for control of New York's underworld -- and won.
It was one of the bloodiest chapters in the city's history and yet... I've never understood how it all began.
Hartmann's behavior at the time seemed unusual. And what of the ace called Black Shadow, who disappeared after his part in the Jokertown Riot, so many years ago? Rumors link him to Hartmann, and claim him to be a master of disguise...
November 21, 1986. Senator GREGG HARTMAN's office, New York City.
VOTE HARTM FOR THE SENATE
My name is BLACK SHADOW. I'm a HERO. I fight CRIME.
...HELP IF I COULD. BUT I CAN'T DO ANYTHING UNLESS YOU GIVE YOURSELF UP.
ABSOLUTELY NOT.
I'M MORE VALUABLE ON THE STREET.
BUT YOU'RE WANTED FOR MURDER.
AND I'M GUILTY! WE BOTH KNOW THAT!
THEY MAY NOT BE ABLE TO PROVE THAT.
WHY TAKE THE CHANCE?

A
I'M WASTING YOUR TIME, SENATOR.
I'M LEAVING SOON ON THAT WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION TOUR.
I WON'T BE ABLE TO HELP YOU WHEN I'M GONE...
I'VE GOT PLENTY TO KEEP ME BUSY WHILE YOU'RE GONE. THE SHADOW FISTS, FOR ONE.
THE SHADOW FISTS?
A NEW GANG ALLIANCE IN JOKER-TOWN.
I like GANGS. So many ways to AMUSE myself with them...
IT'S TIME SOMEBODY PAID THEM SOME ATTENTION.
A
DON'T DO ANYTHING HASTY!
I DON'T WANT YOU TO KILL ANYONE UNTIL I GET THERE!

LIQUOR
1106
LDS BOZOS
S.A.G.
POLICE INCIDENT TAPE DO NOT CROSS
DETECTIVE KANT. LONG TIME NO SEE.
EVENING, MURPHY. WHAT HAPPENED?
TWO BROKEN SKULLS, A CRUSHED RIB CAGE, ONE GUY SHOT HIMSELF WITH HIS OWN GUN...
...AND TWO GUYS FROZEN.
THEY'RE AT THE CLINIC GETTING WARM WATER...
SOUNDS LIKE THAT KILLER ACE, WHAT'S HIS NAME? BLACK SHADOW.
JOKER
HE WAS AFTER BAD GUYS TONIGHT. THERE'S DRUGS AND WEAPONS ALL OVER THE PLACE.
LUCKY HE'S ON OUR SIDE.
LUCKY? JUST THINK ABOUT THE PAPERWORK THIS IS GONNA TAKE.

ONE OF THOSE BAGS IS THAT NEW STUFF -- THAT RAPTURE.
DIDN'T KNOW LOS BOZOS HAD A SUPPLIER.
POL
MAYBE HE'S THIS GUY.
NOW THAT WOULD BE LUCKY. ANY WITNESSES?
'COURSE NOT. ONLY GUY I SAW ON THE STREET WAS... YOU'RE NOT GONNA BELIEVE THIS...
...SENATOR HARTMANN.
WHAT WAS HE DOING DOWN HERE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT?
SAID HE WAS VISITING A FRIEND AT THE CLINIC. LOOKING FOR SOME ACTION, IF YOU ASK ME.
SEEMED KINDA HIGH TO ME.
I GUESS EVEN A SENATOR'S GOT TO UNWIND.

ENCHANTED AS ALWAYS, MADAM CHRYSALIS.
SIT DOWN, MR. DIAMOND. WHAT BRINGS YOU TO JOKERTOWN?
AS ALWAYS, MADAM, I REQUIRE INFORMATION. AND AS IT HAPPENS, I HAVE A SURFEIT OF CASH.
MY SYMPATHIES. CASH CAN BE SO... BULKY.
WHAT'S THE AREA OF YOUR INTEREST?
THE SHADOW FIST SOCIETY.
J
AN EXPENSIVE INTEREST INDEED.
I KNOW A BIT ALREADY. THE WEREWOLVES AND LOS BOZOS FROM JOKERTOWN HAVE ALLIED WITH THE ECRETS OF CHINATOWN.
BUT WHOM ARE THEY ALLIED AGAINST?

IF I LOOKED CLOSELY... WOULD I FIND BOZO BLOOD ON THESE BILLS?
MADAM, YOU SHOCK ME.
I AM A DEALER IN PRECIOUS GOODS. A BUSINESSMAN. AND LIKE ANY BUSINESSMAN...
...I WISH TO FOLLOW THE UPS AND DOWNS OF THE MARKET.
I don't fool her for a second. But she's no HERO. Money's ENOUGH for her.
VERY WELL, MR. DIAMOND. I CAN TELL YOU THE ALLIANCE IS DIRECTED AGAINST A WELL ESTABLISHED INTEREST.
THE SYNDICATE?
"I NEVER SAID THAT WORD, MR DIAMOND. BEAR THAT IN MIND."
GRAZIE, PADRONE.
PALMERO SOCIAL CLUB
BLAM!
BLAM!
BLAM!
"YOU KNOW, DIAMOND, I'M NOT SURE IF I BELIEVE YOUR ENGLISH ACCENT."

"I'M NOT UTTERLY SURE THAT I BELIEVE YOURS EITHER, MADAM."
A BOZO ON A MOTORBIKE?
ROWWWWR!
IT'S TIME SOMEBODY TAUGHT THOSE JOKERTOWN PUNKS A LESSON.
A DEAL? WITH LOS BOZOS?
WHO ARE YOU, ANYWAY?
JAH LOVE, MON.
I ASKED YOUR NAME.
NAME IS JAH LOVE.
I AN I LOOKIN FOR RAPTURE.
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK...
I AN I WANNA MOVE SOME WEIGHT, SEEN. KILOS.
WHICH JAKE POSSE YOU SAY YOU'RE WITH?
BADNEWS POSSE, MON. FROM DE BRONX.

I HEARD OF 'EM. BUT HOW DO I KNOW YOU'RE...
IF I AN I NAH BROWNSON MON, I AN I NAH BE ABLE TO PAY YOU BEFORETIMES.
WE GOT UNDERSTAWDIN NOW, BRAH?
DON COVELLO? THIS IS VIVE. I HEARD LOS BOOGS ARE GONNA BE MOVING SOME RAPTURE.
Phone
YEAH. I THOUGHT YOU'D BE INTERESTED.
FAMERO
WHAT DOES MY FAVORITE JUNKIE SNITCH WANT TO TELL ME?
HEARD ABOUT A BIG RAPTURE DEAL, HARV.
COST YOU FIFTY TO HEAR THE DETAILS.
A bigger deal than you can imagine, Harv.

LOS BOZOS NEED CASH FOR A WAR THEY STARTING. NEED TO SELL RAPTURE.
Not going to Risk my Rasta Jive with these guys. They're the REAL thing.
YOU COULD CONTROL RAPTURE'S TRAFFIC IN THE BRONX, HOMES.
I GET TEN PERCENT.
COVELLO WANTS EVERYBODY DEAD. JUST WAIT TILL THE SPADES BRING THE MONEY.
click click
HEY! THOSE GUYS AREN'T ON OUR PLANT!
click click
"WAIT FOR IT, FAISAN'..."
"WAIT FOR IT, OFFICER.."
click click click
"ANDIAMO!"
"MOVE IN! NOW!"
click click

WE'RE IN A THREE-WAY FIGHT!
K-WHOOM!
KA-BOOM!
BLAM!
BLAM!
I GOT THE BOOD, BUCK! BUT WHERE'S THE CASH?
CH-CH-CH-CH-CH-CH-CH
Like I said, I love GANGS. They're their own worst ENEMIES.

I REGRET HAVING TO LEAVE THE CITY AT SUCH A CRITICAL MOMENT, WHEN VIOLENCE THREATENS OUR CITIZENS...
Like I said, I fight CRIME. But you can't fight CRIME without CAPITAL.
...AND CRIMINAL GANGS RUN OUT OF CONTROL.
SENATE
YOU DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH I REGRET LEAVING.
YEAH, BOSS. LOS BOZZOS ARE WIPED OUT. BUT THEY HAD ALLIES, AND MY GUESS IS THEY'RE RECRUITING TALENT FOR...
...a long, bloody war. I'll never know to what extent Hartmann is responsible. His political career is over now...
But there are many debts he has to pay. And I don't believe we've seen the last of him.

epic

DAVE ELLIOTT
EDITOR

STEVE WHITE
ASSISTANT EDITOR

MARK COX
DESIGNER

MARIE JAVINS
MANAGING EDITOR

CARL POTTS
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

LOOK FOR EPIC #2 IN THIRTY DAYS.

BOOK

CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER™

The Lament configuration. An intricate puzzle of geometric shapes and patterns and lines. Solve the puzzle and you seal a deal with the Cenobites. They know what you want. Your deepest fantasy. Could you face your darkest fantasy realized?

"BIRTH RITE"

Story
DAN CHICHESTER

Art
WILLIAM SIMPSON

Cover
DAVE McKEAN

ISBN #0-87135-845-X